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The Interreg programme Joint Secretariat in Rostock has approved our request for prolongation of the implementation period of the Seagull project by three months. New closing date is 19th of November 2005.

The Seagull Steering Committee (SC) met in Klaipeda on January 31. The main item for discussion and decision was actions to prioritise in the Joint Transnational Development Programme (JTDP) that is currently drafted. The SC decided that 13 prioritised actions within the five focus areas of the JTDP should be developed in the second draft of the Development Programme that is planned to be sent for comments to the 9 ERB member regions in the end of February. The proposed actions are as follows.

• Focus area "*a competitive business environment*":

1. Innovation and SME development.
2. Transport infrastructure actions.
3. Establishment of a Rural Development Academy.
4. Targeted measures to enhance the development of enterprises in environment/energy techniques and products.
5. Analyses and action proposals for tourism development. Creation of a working group for tourism development.

• Focus area "*labour market cooperation*":

6. Compiling a report on the ERB labour market for dissemination activities. Working out an education programme and implement it during two years.

• Focus area "*front runner in implementing EU environment and energy policies*":

7. Establishment of an ERB Water Forum.
8. Promotion of a joint ERB corporate body of university and post graduate school expertise.

• Focus area "*the Kaliningrad Region*":

9. Special support to the Kaliningrad region concerning the prioritised actions.

• Focus area "*exchange of good practice and bench-marking activities*":

10. Exchange programme (on the job training) for regional and local officials and NGO representatives.
11. Establishment of an arena for intensified twinning between municipalities.
12. Introduction of a common database for ERB.

The final proposed action is

13. Promotion and lobbying for ERB being eligible for cross-border cooperation funds (as regions eligible for Interreg III A funds).

For more information about the JTDP and the proposed actions, please contact Rolf A Karlson or Lars Öhrman.

Other activities carried out since previous Seagull News:

- Swedish secretariat meeting in Kalmar County, December 14-15. Discussion about and preparations of the next draft JTDP
- Anchoring meeting with leading politicians in the three Swedish member regions, Karlskrona December 20. Focus areas accepted. The importance of anchoring the JTDP proposals in the municipalities was underlined.
- Info about the project to the Municipal Board in Karlshamn December 21.
- Anchoring meetings with the administration in Kalmar and with the Board of the Regional Council in Kalmar, January 10 and 13.
- Swedish ERB-member regions meeting in Kalmar January 14.
- Participation at the ERB Board meeting in Brussels January 24-25. Meetings with Commissioner Ms Danuta Hübner and representatives of the European Parliament and DG Relex.
- WP2: Swedish expert meeting, December 9. Swedish Regional Conference about the role of Local Authorities in water management, Emmaboda, Sweden, January 19, 2005.

Planned activities during the coming month:

- An Ex-ante evaluation of the Seagull project is starting, conducted by experts from Nordregio in Stockholm and the Institute for Local and Regional Democracy in Växjö.
- Secretariat meeting in Växjö February 7.
- WP4 Swedish-Danish meeting in Emmaboda February 8.
- WP2 Swedish-Lithuanian seminar in Klaipeda February 10. Seminar for local authorities in the Klaipeda region about different ways and alternatives to establish sustainable sewage systems for rural areas. Different technologies will be presented as well as the frame of regulations and directives.
- Meeting with leading politicians in the three Swedish member regions in Växjö, February 14. Presentation and discussion about prioritised actions in the draft JTDP.
- ERB Annual meeting in Klaipeda, February 25-26. Presentation of the second draft of the JTDP. Board decision to send the draft to the member regions for comments.
- WP5 international meeting in Klaipeda, February 28. Discussion about possible info actions about the second draft of the JTDP. Other dissemination activities.
- Preparations of the 5th Progress Report to the Interreg Joint Secretariat in Rostock (deadline 1st March).

Visit www.eurobalt.org for more info about the project status, printed reports, etc.

Seagull is a project for the Euroregion Baltic (ERB) with the main purpose of developing and anchoring a long-term strategy and a joint transnational development programme (JTDP) for the region. The programme will form the basis for future investments in the environment and infrastructure, etc. It will thereby contribute to social, economic and environmentally sustainable development throughout the region.